

“What should good student writing at this grade level look like?”

The answer lies in the writing itself.

The **Writing Standards *in Action* Project** uses high quality student writing samples to illustrate what performance to grade level standards looks like—in action.

Writing Standards *in Action*

Grade 4 English Language Arts

Inform / Explain

(Essay)

Living with
Asperger’s Syndrome



Background Information

GRADE
4

FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework
for ELA and Literacy (2017)

Writing Sample Title:

Living with Asperger's Syndrome

Text Type and Purpose: Inform/Explain
Grade level/Content area: Grade 4 English Language Arts
Type of Assignment: Essay (for newspaper column)
Standards Addressed: (W.4.2), (W.4.3), (W.4.5),
(L.4.1), (L.4.2), (L.4.3)

*See descriptions of these standards
in the right column of the next page.*

Highlights:

This sample of student work meets grade level standards.
It demonstrates the following attributes of effective writing.

The sample:

- Focuses on a concise but effective central idea
- Includes short paragraphs and sentences of varied complexity to make ideas flow easily
- Contains interesting short statements to gain the reader's attention
- Uses well-placed questions to direct the reader's attention to important concepts
- Blends concrete details and personal experiences to explain what it means to live with Asperger's Syndrome
- Includes appropriate transitions to focus the reader's attention on the topic
- Exhibits a lively voice and style to connect with the reader

CONTINUED ►



STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

The student writing sample that follows includes standards-based commentary. The commentary found in this column describes how the writing meets the standards in the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy (2017)* and other content frameworks when applicable.

Understanding the Standards-Based Commentary

1. Grade-specific standards addressed are:

- Listed in the column to the right of student work by strand, grade, and number (or number and letter, where applicable)
- Marked by a colored block with a letter code, also in the column to the right of student work

EXAMPLE: **A**

2. Colored arrow blocks beneath each standard in the right column:

- Are of the same color and letter code as the block that marks the standard being addressed
- Mark standards-based commentary related to the standard being addressed
- Appear in alphabetical order

EXAMPLE: **A1**

3. Corresponding colored arrow blocks within the text:

- Set off sections of student work to which commentary applies
- Do not necessarily appear in alphabetical order—but where evidence of a particular standard exists

EXAMPLE: (begin) **A1** section **A1** (end)

Instructional Practices:

The teacher used the following practices:

- Writing workshop model, including mini-lessons followed by practice
- Writing process: draft, revise, edit, and publish
- Student generated ideas
- Filing system to organize ideas on a topic
- Use of personal anecdotes to develop a topic
- Discussion of model essays written by other students and adults

Assignment Description:

After a presentation on writing by a reporter from the local newspaper, students gathered ideas and selected an essay topic in order to write their own newspaper column. Students organized their ideas and drafted personal essays that they then revised, edited and prepared for publication. Writing produced by six of the finalists, including this sample, was selected for publication as part of a guest series in the newspaper.

Intended Audience:

Peers, parents, teachers, and the newspaper audience

Time:

1 month or more—including time for multiple drafts/revision and work on other assignments

Writing Process:

Alone; with peer feedback; topic chosen by student; drafting; revising; self-editing; peer-editing/peer response

Materials:

Graphic organizers, chart paper

Please note:

The samples may contain inaccuracies in wording and content or shortcomings in the use of standard English conventions.

END OF BACKGROUND ■

**Writing Standards:****Grade 4, Standard 2 (W.4.2)**

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

EXAMPLE: **A B C**

Writing Standards:**Grade 4, Standard 3 (W.4.3)**

Write narratives in prose or poem form to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, descriptive details, and clear sequences.

EXAMPLE: **D E**

Writing Standards:**Grade 4, Standard 5 (W.4.5)**

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

EXAMPLE: **F**

Language Standards:**Grade 4, Standard 1 (L.4.1)**

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking; retain and further develop language skills learned in previous grades.

EXAMPLE: **G H**

Language Standards**Grade 4, Standard 2 (L.4.2)**

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

EXAMPLE: **I**

Language Standards**Grade 4, Standard 3 (L.4.3)**

Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

EXAMPLE: **J**

STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

In this sample...

The writer creates a poignant picture of life with Asperger's Syndrome, enabling the reader to step into his shoes. He juxtaposes his behaviors, that others likely find irritating, with descriptive examples of how they impact his relationships with his mom, teacher, and peers. The organization of the writing is subtle and not at all formulaic while also anticipating questions the reader may have. The piece includes skillful transitions and a variety of interesting words and purposefully placed fragments and sentences. The writer constructs a compelling and informative narrative that illustrates that it is possible to live successfully with Asperger's Syndrome and leaves the reader with an original and thought-provoking conclusion.

Understanding the Standards-Based Commentary

The student writing sample that begins on this page includes in this column standards-based commentary describing how the writing meets the standards in the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy (2017)* and other content frameworks, when applicable. Where they apply, sub-standards marked by letters are included.

Evidence for the commentary is noted in the text of the student writing using color-coded, numbered 'begin' and 'end' arrows.

For example:

A1 marks the beginning and **A1** marks the end of the relevant section in the text.

Please note that the labeled arrows in the text do not necessarily appear in alphabetical order.

Living with Asperger's Syndrome

A **H** **I** Social Skills. **H** **I** What's that? It's the worst nightmare ever. **A**

H **I** Reasons why? **H** **I** That's easy.

C Well, I am not your average child. I am 9 years old and I have something called Asperger's Syndrome. What's that? It's kind

begin section **end**

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ►

Writing. Grade 4, Standard 2:

A W.4.2.a

Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include text features (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

A A Examples: 1

The writer introduces this topic with a short paragraph beginning with a sentence fragment: (*Social skills. What's that? It's the worst nightmare ever*). This paragraph focuses the reader on one significant aspect of living with Asperger's Syndrome.



STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

of like a disease but not quite. **C** It doesn't need a cure because it doesn't do any harm.

I bet you are wondering how it is kind of like a disease if it doesn't do any harm. Well, **C** I am sure you've heard of autism. It's just like that only a lot less severe. It just changes my behavior. **C**

So let's talk about what types of things affect me and lots of other people because of Asperger's Syndrome.

J First of all, it makes it ten times easier and more likely for me to have a temper tantrum or a meltdown. **J** One example is when I was four or five years old, **B** I punched my mom! **B** I also had about ten meltdowns a day.

But that's not all.

The second way I am affected is that it makes me do weird

Writing. Grade 4, Standard 2:
(continued)**B W.4.2.b**

Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.

B B Examples: 1 • 2

The writer skillfully develops the topic (living with Asperger's Syndrome) with concrete details of his experiences: *(I punched my mom, ...one word that drives me crazy is "great"... When I hear it, I have to move my hands like I am climbing a wall).*

C W.4.2.d

Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

C C Examples: 1 • 2

The writer uses precise language to inform the reader: *(Well, I am not your average child. I am 9 years old and I have something called Asperger's Syndrome. What's that? It's kind of like a disease but not quite. ... I am sure you've heard of autism. It's just like that only a lot less severe. It just changes my behavior).*

Writing. Grade 4, Standard 3:**D W.4.3.b**

Use dialogue and description to develop experiences or events or show responses to situations.

D D Examples: 1

The writer describes his experiences developing his social skills, offering a graphic description of how he feels when the word "great" drives him crazy: *(I feel like a house flattened by an F5 twister).*

begin section **end**

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES 



STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

things. When I hear certain words, I have to do certain movements.

For example, **B** one word that drives me crazy is “great.” When

I hear it, I have to move my hands like I am climbing a wall. **B**

D If I don’t do it within 30 seconds, I feel like a house flattened by
an F5 twister. **D**

G In second grade, when this all began, I literally HAD to do
it. My teacher even made me sit on my hands. **G**

There is one last thing I would like to tell you about.

It isolates me.

What does that mean? Here’s a hint: It has to do with conversation.

It makes it very hard to talk to other children my age.

H Want an example? **H** When I went to the cafeteria, to

Writing. Grade 4, Standard 3:
(continued)

E W.4.3.e

Provide a sense of closure appropriate to the narrated experiences or events.

E E Examples: 1

The writer provides a conclusion that tells the reader that he has learned to cope with the impact of Asperger’s Syndrome on his social skills: *(Today I am in many groups. I’m in chorus and math club. In chorus we sing and I get along well. In math club we do challenging math. I get along well there to).*

Writing. Grade 4, Standard 5:

F W.4.5

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

F Overall text reference

The published piece shows evidence of careful planning, revision and editing. The teacher conferred with the writer throughout the writing process.

Note: Comment refers to the piece as a whole rather than a specific example within the text.

Language. Grade 4, Standard 1:

G L.4.1.e

Form and use prepositional phrases in sentences to add more information about qualities such as location, time, agency, and direction.

G G Examples: 1

The writer uses prepositional phrases correctly throughout: *(In second grade, when this all began, I literally HAD to do it. My teacher even made me sit on my hands).*

begin section end

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ►



STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

wait for school to start, I couldn't say a word without being teased.

I lied. There is one more thing I want to tell you. I am able to cope with it. That's why all these stories are from the past.

E Today, I am in many groups. I'm in chorus and math club. In chorus we sing and, I get along well. In math club we do challenging math. I get along well there to. **E**

The future is an unknown and mysterious place. No one knows what will happen in it. You could die in one minute, or live for a hundred years. What do you think mine will be?

Language. Grade 4, Standard 1:
(continued)

H L.4.1.a

Produce complete sentences, using knowledge of subject and predicate to recognize and correct inappropriate sentence fragments and run-on sentences.

H H Examples: 1 · 2 · 3

The writer uses purposeful sentence fragments to enhance the effectiveness of the piece: (*Social skills... Reasons why?... Want an example?*).

Language. Grade 4, Standard 2:

I L.4.2

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

I I Examples: 1 · 2

The writer effectively and correctly uses a variety of punctuation including contractions, commas, and question marks. The writer correctly punctuates purposeful sentence fragments: (*Social skills... Reasons why?*).

Language. Grade 4, Standard 3:

J L.4.3.a

Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely.

J J Examples: 1

The writer conveys his ideas precisely in sentences: (*First of all, it makes it ten times easier and more likely for me to have a temper tantrum or a melt-down*).

begin section **end**

END OF WRITING SAMPLE ■

